

It's like learning a new language

I've always known that I wanted to do some type of research, but I didn't know how to go about it or if I'd do well in it. After years of clinical training I decided it was time (albeit late in my opinion) to be exposed to basic science research to try to broaden my skills. My supervisor Professor Kew arranged for me to join one of his collaborators (Dr Wands) who is the director of the Liver Research Center at the Medical School of Brown University in Providence , Rhode Island .

Of course I was excited at the prospect of a new challenge, but certainly anxious about the unknown.

I arrived at the laboratory as green as one can be, never having pipetted, ever, and barely remembering what a mole is! Needless to say the early days were long and the learning curve frighteningly steep! The journal clubs may as well have been conducted in a dialect of Arabic, because the jargon was barely recognizable as English!

But as they say, things do get better with time, and many mistakes!

Over the last 4 months I was being trained to do basic lab methods/techniques; so I have learned how to process rat liver specimens (from frozen to homogenate), extract protein, lipids, and RNA, determine their concentrations, perform ELISA's, and a range of other applicable methods. More recently I have also learned how to do RT-PCR, this I enjoyed the most. I have had to quickly relearn mathematics, and get over my technophobia because one can't function in the lab without computers and equipment.

In a short while I will be writing up my protocol and equipped with the basics, will start work on my thesis which will examine signal transduction pathways in hepatocellular carcinoma. This I will do over the next 20 months.

The experience is mostly fun, and challenging. I have wonderful colleagues, the lab has a relaxed atmosphere and my mentor is amazing and really patient.

I'm still making mistakes and although I can't say that I know how to do research, or that I will do it well, I know one thing for sure, I am learning!

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